

What is the IDRC?

The Canadian Parliament established the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) as a public corporation in 1970 to stimulate and support research in, by, and for the benefit of developing countries.

Research supported by the IDRC is directed at improving the well-being of people in less-developed countries by adapting and applying science and technology to their needs.

The IDRC also supports programs that will help developing regions to build both human and institutional capacity for bringing the methods of scientific inquiry to bear on the solution of their own problems.

The IDRC supports research in areas that directly concern the day-to-day lives of people — farming, nutrition, education, health services, the impact of technological change on traditional societies, population, communicable diseases, and water supplies, for example.

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Because the rural areas of developing countries have usually been the last to benefit from the advantages of science and technology, research that can improve rural life is emphasized.

**New Approach**

The IDRC has many unique features:

- It has sought to place in perspective the role of the scientist in international development, and has encouraged developing countries to tap the talent of their own scientific communities.
- It obtains its funds from the Parliament of Canada, and reports annually to Parliament, but its operations are guided by an international and autonomous Board of Governors.
- It was the first aid organization set up specifically to support research projects that are identified, designed, conducted, and managed by developing country researchers in their own countries, in terms of their own priorities.
- It has helped to create research networks through which developing countries can share common experiences, conduct studies with a common design in areas of mutual concern, and learn from each other as they work toward common goals.
- It has fostered cooperation between developing country researchers and their counterparts in Canada or in other industrialized countries.

Ottawa — and beyond

The IDRC's headquarters are in Ottawa, where it has an international staff. Regional offices in Asia (Singapore), East Africa (Nairobi), West Africa (Dakar), Latin America (Bogota), and the Middle East (Cairo) serve as coordinating centres linking Ottawa with the researchers and policymakers of developing countries.

The IDRC's 21-member Board of Governors is appointed by the Canadian Government. Under the *IDRC Act*, the chairman, vice-chairman, and nine other governors must be Canadian citizens; the other 10 are non-Canadians. In 1977, six non-Canadian governors were from developing countries (Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, and Zaire); the other four were from Australia, Britain, France, and the United States.

Research interests

The IDRC's activities are carried out by five program divisions. Here is a brief description of each division's area of concentration.

Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Sciences —

Emphasis on crops, farming systems, and reafforestation in arid and semi-arid lands; support for research on food crops that in the past have been neglected such as root crops, food legumes, and oilseeds; agroforestry: the combination of trees with food crops; multiple cropping systems; improvement of pasture lands; use of agricultural wastes and by-products in animal feed; fish farming and shellfish culture; postproduction systems of protection, processing, and distribution of cereal grains, root crops, legumes, fish, fruits, and vegetables; the needs of the rural housewife and her family.

Health Sciences — Concentration of support in

four program areas: basic health services, including health care delivery, role of middle-management personnel, traditional health workers, traditional medicine, and teaching aids; biological and environmental control of some major tropical diseases; studies of techniques to improve water supply systems and sanitation in squatter settlements and rural areas; and studies of more effective methods of fertility regulation and family planning.

Information Sciences — Cooperation with UN agencies to establish worldwide information services with the participation of developing countries; improvement of industrial extension services; support for the creation of centres supplying specialized information on subjects of interest for developing purposes (e.g., particular tropical crops); building new services to provide factual information on family health and family planning; research related to communications problems in developing countries; encouragement of library services; map making, especially from earth satellite images; establishment of a specialized library and computerized information service to serve IDRC staff at headquarters and in the field.

Publications — Disseminating the results of IDRC-supported research, through monographs, technical studies, booklets for policymakers, publications for the general reader, and audiovisual material; supplying articles on science and technology to the media in developing countries, as well as in Canada; encouraging science writing in developing countries; supporting research aimed at devising media suited to link scientists with rural people.

Social Sciences and Human Resources — Concern to help rural peoples in transition from a traditional to a modern way of life, focus on studies leading to strategies that aim at balanced or harmonious development between city and countryside; formation of appropriate science and technology policies; investigation of the most effective means of delivering rural primary education; research into the determinants of population change, and formulation of population policies; scholarship programs to broaden the resource base of Canadians and of scholars in the poorer countries trained in problems of development.

Working together

Each program division channels funds to institutions in developing countries (government departments, universities, research centres, etc.) for specific research projects. The local institution is expected to pay a portion of local costs.

When the Centre agrees to support a research project, the IDRC and the developing country institution concerned enter into a contract that stipulates the purpose of the project, research methods, payments, and a time schedule for research.

Every project proposal is reviewed by the IDRC's

professional staff, and assessed in the light of factors such as:

National priority: Does the proposal fit into a priority expressed by a government or research institute in a developing country?

Regional applicability: Are the research findings likely to have useful application over a region and in countries beyond the one in which research takes place?

Practicality: Will the research help close gaps in living standards in those countries, and lessen the imbalance in development between rural and urban areas?

Local resources: Will it make the fullest possible use of local resources and research workers from the region?

Research training: Will it result in better trained and more experienced researchers, and more effective research institutions?

Research area: Does it fall within the IDRC's areas of concentration?



Into the future

Up to the end of March 1977, the IDRC had committed \$95 million to support 503 research projects. The money spent might seem small in the context of global development problems. The significance of IDRC-supported research does not lie just in the amount of money spent but in how the results of research can strengthen and enrich the fabric of life in developing countries.

Research directed at the economic and social development of nations does not produce instant



solutions. Time is needed for the results of research to be tested, adapted, and adopted by people in developing countries for their own benefit.

Even in its first six years, however, the IDRC and its partners in developing countries have been able to demonstrate the potentially far-reaching benefits of development research. Some examples:

- A milling system developed in Maiduguri, Nigeria, has overcome many drawbacks — such as limited services, unsatisfactory quality control, and unstable prices — associated with existing neighbourhood grain mills. The Maiduguri mill project is a practical demonstration of a systems approach to postharvest handling of grains.
- Asian scientists, supported by Canadian expertise, and helped by a hormone from British Columbia salmon, have, for the first time ever, bred milkfish in captivity. Artificial breeding can greatly increase the availability of milkfish, substantially increasing protein supplies in Asia.
- The revival of multicropping in Asia has enabled farmers to combine crops in time and space. Farmers learn to grow two or three crops in one field: for example, peanuts and sweet potatoes side by side with rows of corn. A farmer can plant a second crop in a field previously used for a single crop, even before he has harvested the first.
- The adoption of policies to utilize paramedical or nonmedical personnel in health systems has stimulated the need for teaching, supervisory, and management skills. The development of curricula including these skills is indicated and applied research projects will be supported in teaching and management systems adapted to the health field.

• An anti-ratpox vaccine developed in India is being tested among groups of women in six countries. The vaccine may also prove useful in treating choriocarcinoma, a cancer of the placenta.

- Teams in 10 countries from Argentina through Egypt to India, working with a Peruvian coordinator, are studying how science and technology policies can make greatest use of local skills, and derive most benefit from imported technology, particularly in large- and medium-scale industry.
- A research network has completed a study of housing requirements and policy in eight Asian countries (Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Singapore, and Hong Kong). The researchers assessed how each country's experience might be applied in the others, and reached agreement on a common approach to housing standards.
- Project Impact, an innovative attempt to provide universal primary education in Southeast Asia without crippling costs, has produced promising results in the Philippines and Indonesia, and the experiment is to be extended to Malaysia. Self-instruction, mutual help, and flexibility are key features of this system.
- A new mass circulation magazine, *Famille et Développement*, with a wholly African editorial board, has been established in French-speaking Africa, to provide readers with factual information on family health and related questions. The magazine, with a print run of about 30 000 copies, caters to teachers, students, paramedical workers, and many other groups concerned with health and development.
- With IDRC assistance for training, equipment, and initial staffing, two major regional centres — one in Latin America and one in Southeast Asia — are playing important roles in collecting and distributing agricultural information within the global information system, AGRIS, operated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

Do you want to know more?

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